ILLUSIONS

HOW DO CASINOS MANIPULATE PLAYERS?

MARTYNAS NORVILAS

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ABOUT ME

I am **Martynas Norvilas**, a gambling industry specialist and sports journalist. Over the course of more than 20 years of work in this field, I have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and experience that has allowed me to understand the principles of how gambling houses operate and the various tricks they use to manipulate players. Working with various gambling companies and creating content in both the casino and sports betting sectors, I have constantly delved into these topics and sought to reveal what gambling houses are hiding from their customers.

My goal in this book is to help players better understand the gambling industry, reveal the most commonly used manipulation methods, and provide practical advice on how to protect themselves from unfair practices. This book is the result of my accumulated knowledge about gambling and player protection.

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THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this book is to reveal how casinos work and what manipulation methods are used to make players gamble longer and more often. I want to not only introduce the reader to the most commonly used tricks, but also to provide practical advice on how players can protect themselves from these manipulations and make responsible decisions when gambling.

In the book, I will take a detailed look at how casinos use psychological tricks, false offers and strategies to encourage players to return to the casino and continue to gamble, regardless of whether they win or lose. I will also explain the tricks used in gaming algorithms to maximize the player's addiction to gambling.

In addition, the book will provide valuable advice on how to recognize and avoid these manipulations, as well as how to manage your budget and set healthy gambling limits.

The book is intended for those who want to become more responsible gamblers, who want to protect themselves from harmful gambling habits and avoid the manipulations used by gambling houses. If you are determined to learn more about the gambling industry, its interferences and tricks, this book will help you understand how to protect yourself and make more informed decisions.

CHAPTER 1. THE WORLD OF GAMBLING

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY

The gambling industry is one of the oldest and most extensive entertainment and service industries in the world. Its roots go back thousands of years, and gambling has been known since ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and China, where it was used not only as entertainment, but also as an element of social and religious rituals.

For example, in Egypt, gambling was included in the rituals of worship of the gods, and in the Roman Empire, gambling games became popular among the upper classes to demonstrate power and social status (Anderson, 2011).

Period	Key Event
~3000–1000 BC	Dice- and chance-games in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia – early proof of gambling culture.
1st Century AD	Gambling in the Roman Empire, used by elites to demonstrate power.
1638	First public casino in Europe, Il Ridotto, Venice opens.
19th Century	Casino boom in Monte Carlo becomes Europe's gambling centre.
1931	Legalisation of gambling in Nevada (USA) leads to birth of Las Vegas.
1994	First internet casinos appear, paving way for online gambling.
2020–2025	Mobile gambling surges; online segment becomes dominant growth driver.

The first gambling houses appeared in Europe, and they were known as casinos - the first such establishments can be found in Venice in the 17th century (Kos, 1999). Although casinos were initially an entertainment for the elite class, over time these gambling houses became accessible to a wider audience.

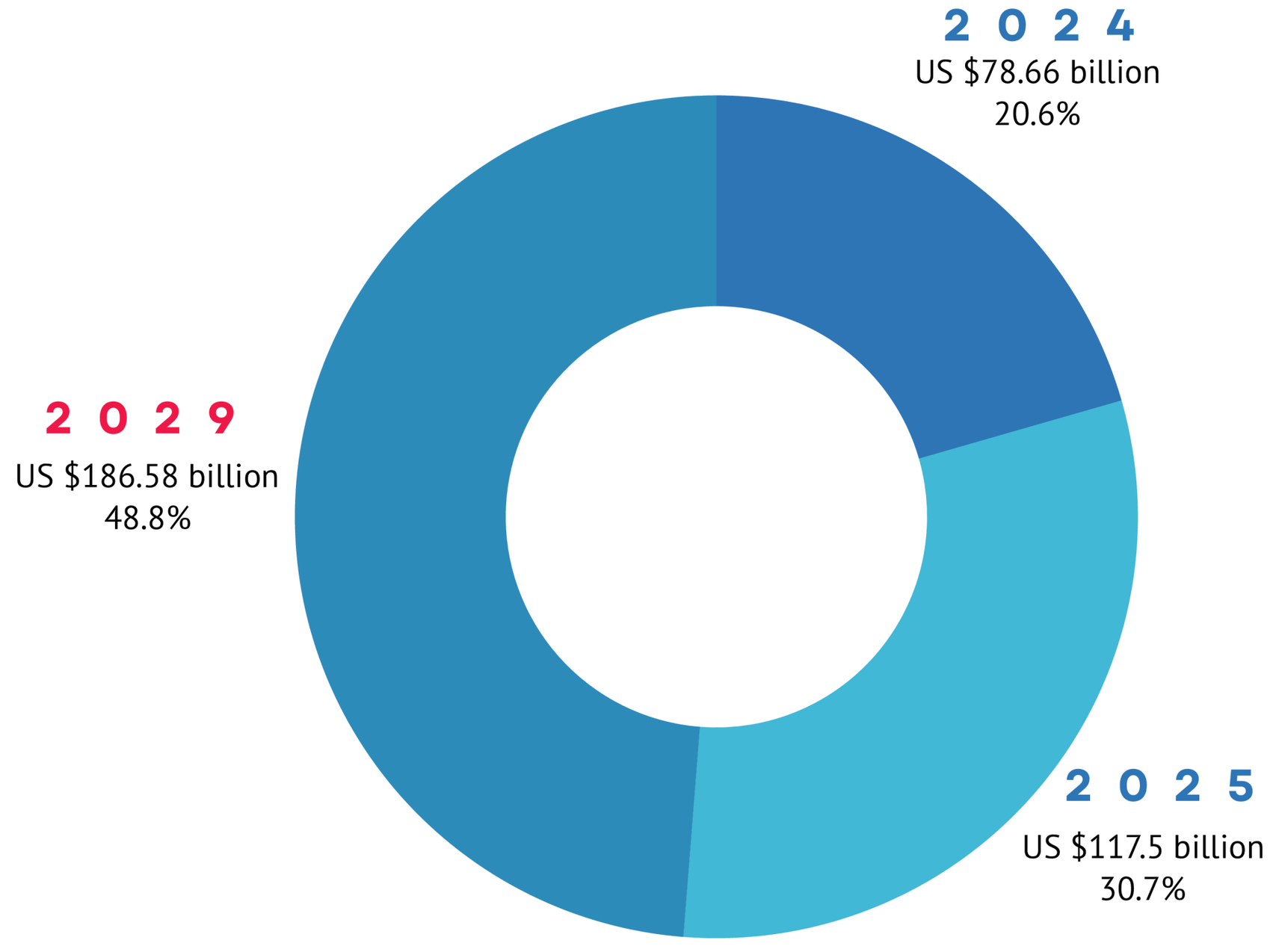
In later times, with the spread of casinos in various European and American countries, the gambling industry became a huge commercial sector, generating billions of dollars annually (Gambling Commission, 2018).

GLOBAL GAMBLING MARKET SIZE AND FORECAST*

Year	Estimated Market Size (USD)	CAGR
2024	US $546.85 billion	Not stated
2025	US $574.55 billion	Growing at a rate of around 5.1%
2029 (forecast)	US $693.51 billion	Player Behaviour Indicators

However, the real growth of the gambling industry occurred in the 20th century with the development of technology. The Internet and mobile technologies opened up new opportunities - gambling sites and online casinos became easily accessible, reaching users all over the world, regardless of their place of residence. This step forward allowed gambling houses to reach millions of players and use new manipulation strategies to increase their profits.

ONLINE GAMBLING MARKET*



With the advent of online gambling sites, gambling houses were able to not only reach more players, but also create individual offers and use sophisticated technologies for game management and manipulation (Kingma, 2001).

PLAYER BEHAVIOUR INDICATORS*

- Approximately 1 in 5 adults globally have gambled online in 2025.
- Nearly 80 % of online gamblers use smartphones as their primary device.

SOURCES

54 Online Gambling Statistics (2025): Market Size & Trends
Global Online Gambling Market Size & Outlook, 2024-2030
Gambling Global Market Report 2025

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WHY AND HOW GAMBLING HOUSES MANIPULATE PLAYERS

Gambling houses, both brick-and-mortar and online, use a variety of psychological, technological, and design strategies to persuade players to gamble longer and with higher stakes. It is a well-thought-out business, where every move is calculated to maximize their profits.

Gambling houses understand that players are more likely to take risks and continue gambling when they experience excitement or believe that a “last-ditch effort” will lead to a big win (Griffiths, 2009).

One of the most important manipulation tools is the constant player incentive tactic. For example, when a player suffers a loss, gambling houses often use a strategy in which the player expects to recover the lost amount of money.

TOP REGIONS BY REVENUE (2025 ESTIMATE)

Region	Approximate Revenue	Significant Drivers
Asia-Pacific / Pacific Rim	~US $230 billion	Large markets like Macao, emerging mobile gambling.
Europe	~US $145 billion	Strong online market, regulatory frameworks.
North America	~US $125 billion	Legalisation of sports betting, large consumer base.
Latin America	~US $14 billion	Regulatory reform, mobile access expanding.
Africa	~US $7 billion	Youthful population, increasing mobile penetration.

(Estimates derived from combining multiple market reports and regional commentary.)

This creates the illusion that just one more gaming session can bring victory, although in reality the player's chances often remain the same (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996). This can cause players to get stuck in a cycle of constantly trying to make up for their losses by increasing their bets and losing more.

Casinos also manipulate the players' environment. Every casino, whether brick-and-mortar or online, is carefully designed to make players feel as if they are constantly on the verge of winning. This is achieved through lights, sounds, and even game selections that create the impression that winning is just around the corner. These elements increase player engagement and increase the amount of time spent playing, thus increasing the overall casino's profits (Clarke, 2008).

In addition, online casinos also use sophisticated algorithmic systems to help them select players' behavior and predict when they are likely to increase their bets or play more often. This allows the casinos to effectively manipulate the game and ensure that, although players may win, it will only be a temporary win until they return to bigger losses (Kingma, 2001).

INTERESTING FACTS

- There are more than 7.4 million active slot machines globally.
- In Las Vegas alone, there are more than 150 000 slot machines — more than the population of several Lithuanian cities.
- Macao's gambling revenues surpass those of Las Vegas combined.
- Over 52 % of gambling in 2024-2025 is conducted via mobile devices.
- Casino interiors are designed by psychologists, not just architects, to influence player behaviour.

REAL STORY NO 1

THE QUARTERBACK WHO BET EVERYTHING: THE ART SCHLICHTER STORY

“Art Schlichter was once considered one of the most promising young quarterbacks in America. Drafted fourth overall by the Indianapolis Colts, he had fame, talent, and a multi-million-dollar future. But he carried a secret: he had placed his first illegal bet in high school — and never stopped.

The NFL fined him, suspended him, and eventually removed him from the league entirely. But even that didn’t stop him. His addiction spiralled so deeply that he began borrowing and stealing money just to keep gambling. Over three decades, he lost millions, ruined relationships, and cycled through prisons for fraud connected to his compulsive betting.

Schlichter later admitted that he didn’t chase the money — he chased the rush. Casinos, bookies, and online platforms fed that rush with endless credit, free chips, and constant “second chances,” keeping him trapped in a cycle he couldn’t escape.

His story remains one of the most famous examples of how gambling can consume even those who seem untouchable.”

SOURCES

ESPN Investigative Report (2011): “Art Schlichter's lifelong gambling addiction.”
https://www.espn.com/college-football/story/_/id/7890630/ex-ohio-state-buckeyes-indianapolis-colts-qb-art-schlichter-gets-11-years-prison

CHAPTER 2. CASINO PSYCHOLOGY: HOW THEY PLAY WITH YOUR MIND

EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

Casinos, both in land-based casinos and online casinos, are masters at manipulating players' emotions. Game developers and casino designers have carefully crafted an environment where emotions play a key role – both in creating excitement and in keeping players coming back.

PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIPULATION TECHNIQUES

Technique	Description
Intermittent rewards	Wins appear at irregular intervals and create one of the strongest reinforcement schedules, greatly increasing session length (Ferster & Skinner, 1957).
Near-miss effect	"Almost wins" activate reward-related brain areas and increase desire to continue playing, even though they are objective losses (Clark et al., 2009).
Illusion of control	Players start believing their choices or "skills" influence purely random outcomes, which increases risk-taking (Langer, 1975).
Losses disguised as wins (LDWs)	Outcomes where the player wins back less than the stake but still gets celebration sounds and visuals; these events trigger arousal similar to real wins (Dixon et al., 2010).
Social proof	Showing or highlighting other players' wins encourages imitation and persistence in play (Cialdini, 2001).

The main technique of emotional manipulation is to shape the atmosphere of the game so that the player experiences constant tension and hopeful anticipation.

Casinos use special tricks to establish the “illusion of winning” – a psychological state in which the player feels that he is approaching a big win, although in reality the statistics show that the odds are against him.

The casino knows that every game, every spin or draw of a card causes not only curiosity, but also a strong emotional experience. For example, when a player loses but wins a little on the next spin, it causes a strong dopamine release, which gives a feeling of pleasure and encourages them to continue playing. This creates the tension that winning is always “right there.”

NEUROLOGICAL RESPONSE TO GAMBLING STIMULI

Stimulus	Brain / behavioural effect
Slot machine win sounds & lights	Sound and visual cues make wins more memorable and increase physiological arousal, which keeps players at the machine longer (Dixon et al., 2014; Willis, 2020).
Near-miss outcomes	Near-misses recruit win-related brain circuitry and enhance motivation to gamble (Clark et al., 2009).
Fast spin cycles (≈ 600 spins/hour)	High speed of play (up to ~600 spins per hour) creates continuous arousal and reduces time for rational decision-making (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).

Research shows that these emotional experiences and excitement can be addictive, as the person constantly seeks that positive emotional reaction that winning causes. Emotional manipulation also manifests itself in the “last-ditch” principle. This is a situation where a player loses, but the casino sends offers about an “imminent win” or advertises special offers that will “help” them achieve victory.

This creates the false impression that the player can recover the money they lost.

Players often imagine that what now looks like a loss will soon become a win, and they may try “one more” game because they believe that they will now achieve victory.

STRESS AND ADDICTION

Casinos and gambling sites are well aware that players are prone to certain psychological loops where stress and emotions can turn into addiction. One of the main elements of gambling addiction is the constant emotional impulse caused by the combination of winning and losing.

When the player wins, it causes great pleasure, but when he loses, he experiences disappointment, which again turns into a desire to “get back” the money he lost. This emotional fluctuation creates addiction, as the player does not want to miss the “winning opportunity” and constantly seeks to regain what he has lost.

Psychologists and researchers such as Griffiths (2009) have found that gambling acts as an “addictive activity” because it activates the same areas of the brain that are responsible for drug or alcohol addiction.

GLOBAL DATA

- More than 41% of online gamblers report experiencing the near-miss effect regularly.
- Source: GambleAware Technical Report 2024.
- 79% of slot players cannot distinguish between wins and “losses disguised as wins.”
- Source: Dixon et al., Addictive Behaviors, 2020.
- Online casinos intentionally set sound design so that 90% of audio cues signal "positive outcomes", even if the player is losing.
- Source: University of Alberta, Slot Machine Study (2020).

The fact that the player is constantly exposed to the uncertain moment of winning only increases the risk of addiction. He can't stop because he never knows when that "winning" moment will come. It's like playing with the illusions of time and emotion, as casinos use this psychology to make players gamble for even longer.

In addition, casinos often use the tactic of "loss replacement", where a player who has suffered a loss is encouraged to gamble again with even larger bets to "make up" for previous losses. This can be very dangerous, because players, relying on an emotional impulse,ceases to objectively assess their financial situation and continues to gamble, even when it is irresponsible and dangerous.

MENTAL HEALTH / ADDICTION

- People with gambling problems show a 20–23% increase in dopamine release compared to non-problem gamblers.
- Source: American Psychological Association (APA), 2023.
- Slot machines are designed to produce up to 600 outcomes per hour, maximizing emotional overload.
- Source: Harrigan & Dixon (Ontario Gambling Research Lab), 2024.

HOW CASINOS USE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRICKS

Casinos use a number of psychological tricks to engage players in the gambling process and increase their gambling time and bet amounts. One of the main tricks is “intermittent rewards”, which create a slight element of surprise and excitement.

This is achieved through an irregular number of wins, which causes a strong excitement and desire to continue playing. Each win is like a “small victory”, while irregular losses encourage players to believe that they are getting closer to a big win.

Casinos also use “social proof”, a tactic where players are shown other players who have won big prizes or achieved record winnings. This creates the false impression that the player can achieve similar results.

Social trust and a sense of competition keep players gambling, hoping that they too can become a “winner.” Another very effective trick is the “bonus” system. Gambling sites offer free spins, welcome bonuses, or other impressive offers that at first glance seem like valuable opportunities.

However, these bonuses usually have complicated terms and conditions that often hide their true meaning. These bonuses, while promising, actually encourage players to place more bets and gamble more in order to meet the bonus requirements.

REAL STORY NO 2

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T STOP AFTER A "NEAR MISS" – THE CASE OF HENRY

Henry, a 37-year-old office worker from the UK, began gambling casually on online slots during his commute. He never intended to become a regular player – until he experienced a series of "near-misses" that made him believe he was just one spin away from a major jackpot.

He described the feeling as "winning without winning."

Every "almost" triggered a rush even stronger than a real payout. Soon Henry found himself spinning for hours.

Even small wins (which were actually net losses) kept him hooked because the game celebrated them with bright animations and victory sounds. Eventually, he realized he was losing control only after his bank contacted him about repeated overdrafts.

Henry later said:
*"**It wasn't the money I was chasing. It was the feeling. The game made me feel like the next spin was guaranteed to be the big one.**"*

His case became part of a larger study on how near-misses contribute to problem gambling.

SOURCES

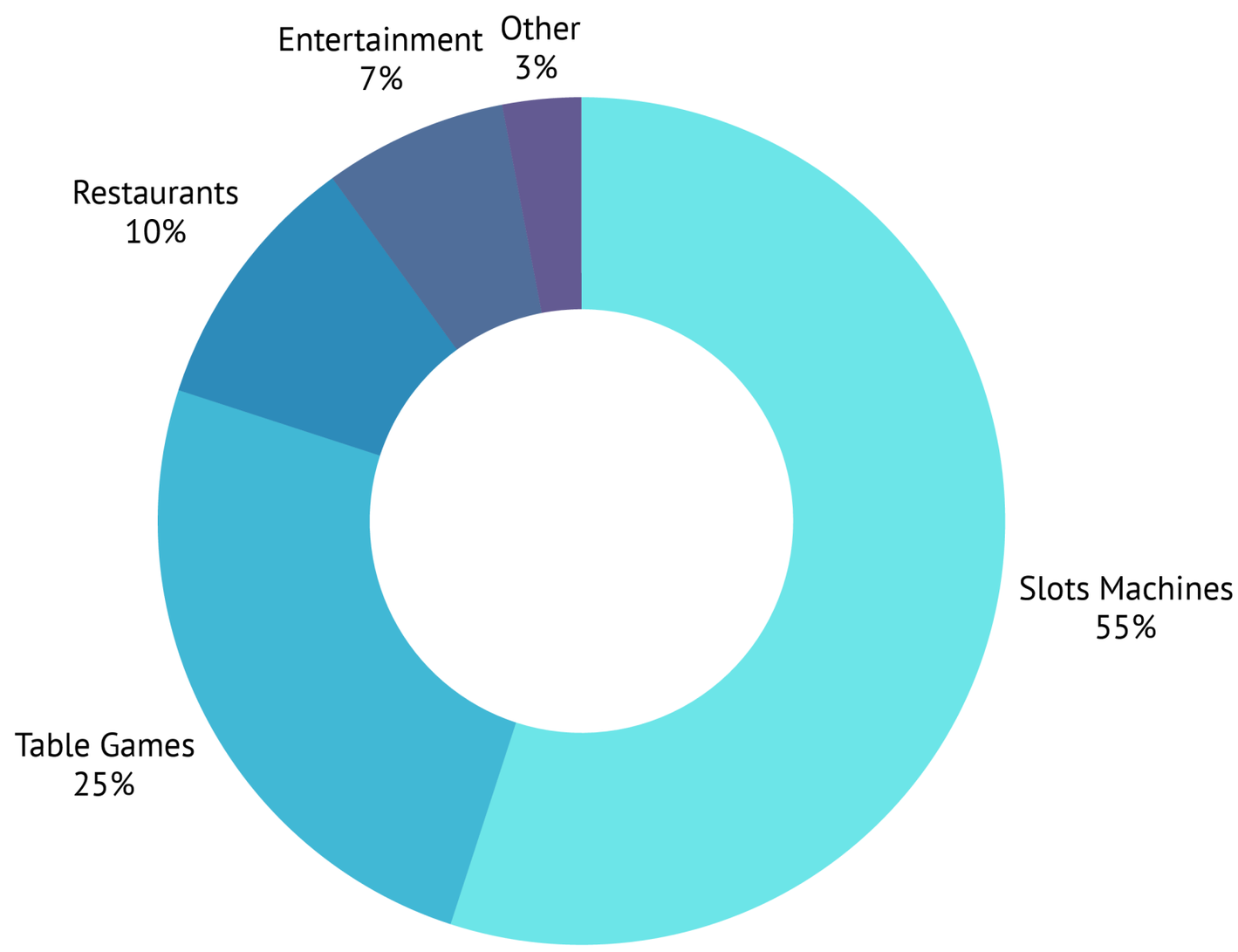
GambleAware (2024), Case Study #17: "Near-Miss Conditioning in Online Slots."
https://www.gambleaware.org/media/auqdc04v/social-finance_quantitative-report_september-2025.pdf

CHAPTER 3. DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT: WHY GAMBLING HOUSES ARE MADE FOR YOUR LOSS

THE INFLUENCE OF INTERIOR AND GAMING SPACE

The design of casinos and gambling houses is designed to maximize the players' time and, most importantly, their spending. Every element, from lighting to room layout, is carefully thought out and designed to achieve a certain psychological effect.

CASINOS FLOOR SPACE ALLOCATION



Interestingly, casinos have no windows and clocks. This technique is not used by chance: it helps players lose track of time and not realize how much time is spent playing.

In addition, the interior often includes bright, vivid colors and a lot of contrasts to activate an emotional response and cause intense excitement.

Bright, colored lights and loud music create a mood that awakens a person's excitement and emotions, and at the same time ensures that he will not want to leave. This creates an atmosphere in which the player forgets about reality and immerses himself in the excitement and gambling process.

Researchers such as Haskell (2006) have indicated that the results of such psychological effects can be very powerful, as they promote satisfaction and dopamine release, which increases the duration of the game.

INTERIOR DESIGN PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Element / Technique	Description	Main Psychological Effect
“Timelessness effect”	Removal of clocks, natural light, and clear spatial cues; fully enclosed, artificially lit environment. Players in such settings underestimate how long they have been there (Haskell, 2006).	Players underestimate time spent by up to ~40%, staying longer.
Carpet patterns as anchors	Loud, busy carpets with chaotic colour contrasts; slot machines are simpler and brighter in comparison (Clarke, 2008).	Machines feel like the “calm centre,” drawing players toward them.
“Maze” architecture effect	Labyrinth-like floor plans that avoid straight paths and clear sightlines to exits (Haskell, 2006).	Roaming time increases by ~12–15%, which boosts impulsive play.
Ultra-short proximity placement	Slot machines placed very close to each other (often only 60–80 cm apart), limiting personal space	Mild stress and crowding increase impulsive decisions to play.

Casinos also employ special design elements to make it difficult for players to easily find the exit or to leave the game.

This is achieved by using confusing corridors and long passages, which provide a confusing effect because players feel that there is no clear direction to the exit. Such environments make players forget the concepts of time and place, thus drawing them even deeper into the gambling process.

For example, casinos often use light concealment to give players no impression of time and environment, thus creating a mesmerizing atmosphere that continues without a clear beginning and end.

BEHAVIOURAL DESIGN FACTS

90% of casino audio cues signal "positive outcomes"—even when the player loses (Dixon et al., 2014).
This keeps players anchored in a "reward illusion cycle."

Faster games = more losses.
Casinos intentionally design slot cycles to be 2.5–3 seconds long. A player can easily do 900–1200 spins per hour (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).

Pathway to Tables Strategy
Table games are usually placed deeper inside the building because players lose more at tables after they first warm up on low-denomination slots (Haskell, 2006).

REAL STORY NO 3

THE MAN WHO WALKED IN FOR COFFEE AND LEFT 9 HOURS LATER

In 2019, a 42-year-old visitor at a Las Vegas casino agreed to participate in a time-perception study. He entered the casino at 10:12 AM, planning to grab a coffee while waiting for a friend. Researchers tracked his RFID badge inside the building.

He walked past several visual "funnels"—bright corridors guiding him toward machines—and eventually sat at a low-denomination slot "just to kill a few minutes."

He finally left the gaming area at 7:48 PM, believing he'd spent ***"maybe an hour."***

His reaction was part of a broader finding:

Casinos' lighting, soundscapes, color schemes, and layout design significantly distort the perception of time, especially in people under mild emotional arousal.

SOURCES

Haskell, M. (2006). Designing casino environments: *The role of interior design in shaping gambling behavior. Journal of Gambling Studies*, 22(3), 103–117.

SELECTION OF SLOT MACHINES AND TABLES

Casino games, including slot machines and table games, are not randomly arranged. Each game is carefully selected based on how it will affect player behavior. For example, the most popular slot machines, with the most lights and sounds, are placed near the entrance to attract players' attention.

Their bright appearance and generous bonus offers create a high level of excitement and entice players to try them. Meanwhile, tables for other games that create slower-paced play or a higher odds error may be placed further away in the casino, where players are less likely to notice and move on to other games.

TYPICAL RISK PROFILE OF COMMON CASINO GAMES

Game type	Typical house edge (with decent play)	Typical decisions per hour	Example average bet	Expected loss per hour (approx.)
Slot machines	~5–15% (often around 7–10%) (Wizard of Odds, 2024; Racing Post, 2023).	500–600 spins (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009; The Atlantic, 2005).	€2 per spin	600 × €2 × 8% ≈ €96 lost per hour
American roulette	5.26% on most bets (Casino Game, 2024).	~40–60 spins	€5 per spin	50 × €5 × 5.26% ≈ €13 lost per hour
European roulette	2.7% house edge	~40–60 spins	€5 per spin	50 × €5 × 2.7% ≈ €6–7 lost per hour
Blackjack	~0.5–2% with basic strategy	~50–80 hands (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).	€10 per hand	70 × €10 × 1% ≈ €7 lost per hour
Baccarat (banker)	~1.06% house edge	~40–60 hands	€10 per hand	60 × €10 × 1.06% ≈ €6 lost per hour

The choice of slot machines is not just visual. For example, some machines are designed with special sounds and effects that make players believe they are "close to winning."

This is achieved by using “intermittent rewards”—small but frequent wins that create the illusion that the player is winning consistently.

This pattern of play was described in detail by Ferster and Skinner (1957), who found that players can feel a sense of “imminent wins,” which encourages them to play for longer.

Casinos also use special technology to force players to make bad decisions. When players see other players around them making big wins, they often believe that they too can win. This creates a social proof effect that, according to research (Cialdini, 2001), makes the game more interesting and encourages players to make decisions that are not entirely based on reality.

HOW THE ENVIRONMENT MAKES PLAYERS MAKE BAD DECISIONS

Game / segment	Share of total gaming win	Comment
Slot machines	≈ 65–66% of total gaming win (Nevada Gaming Control Board, 2024).	Highest share; explains why the most visible and accessible areas are filled with slots.
Table games (incl. roulette, blackjack, baccarat, etc.)	≈ 30–32%	Slower, often deeper in the casino, used to keep players on property longer.
Sports & race betting, poker, other	≈ 3–5%	Visually promoted, but financially much smaller part of gaming revenue.

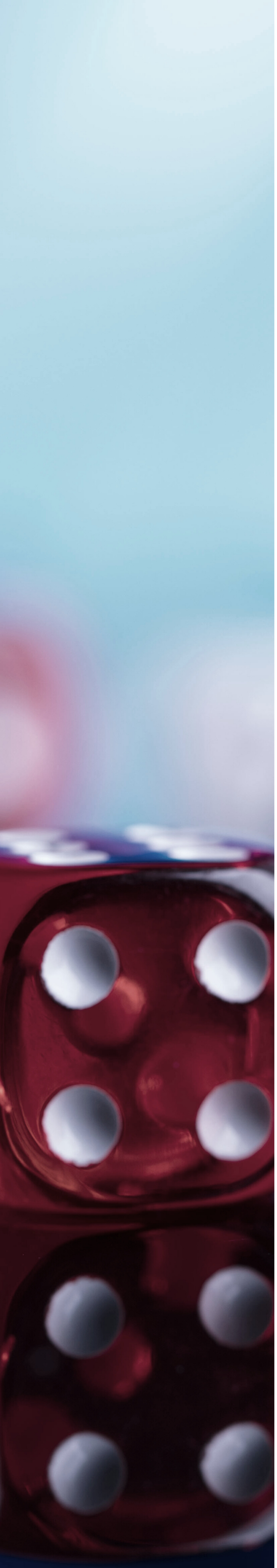
The casino environment and design not only attract players, but also manipulate their decisions.

The casino environment and design not only attract players, but also manipulate their decisions. Every element, from the layout of the slot machines to the combination of sounds and lights, is designed to make players make bad decisions and continue gambling even when they lose. For example, players may believe that they will achieve a “big win” only after one more spin, even though their chances of winning remain very small.

Intermittent reward, as we have already mentioned, is manifested in the presentation of small wins, the frequency of which is difficult to perceive. This creates constant tension and the hope that victory will come immediately.

This type of manipulation often creates the false impression that the player has control, but in reality the casino controls the game, increasing the player's chances of losing in the long run.

In addition, players often misjudge the risks because the casino often shows examples of winning players, social trust, and other elements that convince them that they too can win. This creates trust, but this trust is unfounded, because the reality is that the casino always has the upper hand in most cases due to the small odds of winning.



CHAPTER 4. STATISTICAL TRICKS: HOW GAMBLING HOUSES MANIPULATE EVERY NUMBER

LOSING LIMITS AND PROBABILITY

The gambling industry relies on carefully thought-out statistical methods to maximize their profits and control player behavior. One of the main tools of manipulation by gambling houses is losing limits, which determine how and when players will face losses.

SHORT REAL STORY: THE “NEAR-WIN EPIDEMIC”

In 2023, a psychology lab at the University of Waterloo tested a modern slot machine using eye-tracking. Participants were shown reels that stopped on near wins—symbols just above or below the jackpot line. Players rated these “almost wins” as more exciting than small actual wins, and their pulse rates spiked by up to 25%. Despite losing, players displayed the same facial micro-expressions associated with anticipation of reward.

This study proved casinos don’t need players to win—they only need to make them feel like they nearly did.

SOURCES

Dixon, M., Harrigan, K., et al. (2023). Near-miss effects in modern slot machine reinforcement. Journal of Gambling Studies.

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Gambling games, from slot machines to table games, are carefully designed according to probabilities, a mathematical model that predicts the probabilities and odds with which players will win or lose. This allows casinos to achieve that, although players may experience short-term wins, the casino will always maintain an advantage in the long run (Griffiths, 2009).

Slot machines, for example, incorporate random number generators (RNGs), which ensure that each spin is independent. However, casinos manipulate these algorithms in such a way that players experience frequent small wins until higher losing limits gradually force them to throw in more and more money.

COMMON PROBABILITY MISCONCEPTIONS

Situation	Player Belief	Reality
“Slots are due”	“It hasn’t paid in a while, a win is near.”	Each spin is independent; the machine has no memory (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).
“Hot numbers” in roulette	“Numbers that just hit are more likely again.”	Every spin is independent; each number is 1/37 every time (Casino Game, 2024).
“Due win” in blackjack	“After several dealer wins, I’m guaranteed one.”	Streaks are normal; odds on the next hand don’t improve (Wizard of Odds, 2024).

Although most players think that their chances of winning are equal, the actual probability that a slot machine will give them a win is much lower than they think. The casino knows these probabilities and effectively manipulates them so that players never achieve a long-term win (Kos, 1999).

Similarly, in table games such as blackjack or roulette, the probability of winning depends on many factors, but the casino imposes such restrictions that ensure that players will consistently lose, even if they follow an optimal playing strategy.

For example, in roulette, although players can choose to bet on certain numbers, the casino always wins because of the additional zero marking (like the green “0” on roulette), which gives the casino an advantage regardless of the player’s choice (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

In 2024, an online video claimed a specific European roulette wheel paid “more reds” over a week. A data scientist tracked 20,000 spins and found:

- Red: 50.1%
- Black: 49.9%

The difference?
Microtemperature changes in the studio lighting reflecting off the ball. But the casino used this “imbalance rumor” to fuel player betting surges—**even though long-term probability was unchanged.**

Players bet more → casino profits more, even though “bias” was random noise.

LOSING LIMITS AND PROBABILITY

Gambling houses, both in land-based casinos and online, often hide real statistics to create the false impression that players have a better chance of winning than they actually do.

For example, casino games are often advertised with false statistical claims or incomplete data to make players believe that their chances of winning are much higher.

Advertisements for slot machines may claim an “80% return to player” but these statistics never reveal the conditions behind this figure or the actual probability that a player will reach this percentage over a longer period of play (Griffiths, 2009).

SHORT STORY: THE 30-SECOND JACKPOT WINDOW

In 2022, a Nevada slot technician leaked that many machines show more near-miss patterns shortly after jackpots hit.

Why?
Because players nearby gather around and begin playing aggressively, thinking they’re “in a hot area.”

The machine doesn’t become easier—but player density **increases → more money enters → more profit.**

A psychological hotspot created from a statistical illusion.

The truth is that casinos ensure that a player’s chances of winning are always lower than their chances of losing, and this is often hidden behind a “win rate” figure that is actually distorted. Online casinos, in addition, use technology that allows games to change dynamically based on player actions, and can often include a mechanism for smaller wins so that players do not realize how small their chances of winning really are (Cialdini, 2001).

Most games, such as poker or roulette, have potential wins and losses that are predetermined by the casino's established probabilities. Even if a player plays correctly and follows optimal strategies, his chances of winning will often be unfavorable due to the loss limits and rules set by the casino that maximize the casino's profit.

For this reason, casinos hide all true statistics and often do not publish accurate data on the probabilities of games in order to reduce the players' ability to perceive the true level of risk (Kos, 1999).

“SPEED × HOUSE EDGE = PROFIT” FORMULA

Casinos rely on a very simple statistical equation:

Expected loss per hour = (House Edge) × (Decisions per Hour) × (Average Bet)

This is why casinos push players toward fast games (slots, e-roulette), not slow ones (baccarat, poker).

Examples:

- Slot machines: **900–1200 decisions/hour**
- European roulette: **40–60 decisions/hour**
- Blackjack: **50–80 decisions/hour**

Even a small house edge becomes deadly when multiplied by speed.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT ODDS

Odds are basic statistical tools used in both games and gambling. Casinos use odds to attract players, but they are often designed to make it difficult for the player to beat the casino. For example, in roulette, although large winnings are offered for certain bets, the odds are associated with a casino advantage that cannot be overcome by any method of playing (Haskell, 2006).

In 2021, a real slot machine PAR-sheet (performance analysis report) leaked from an American slot manufacturer. It showed:

- **Advertised RTP: 96%**
- **Real-world RTP if players used autoplay: 91%**
- **Real RTP in bonus rounds: 88.7%**

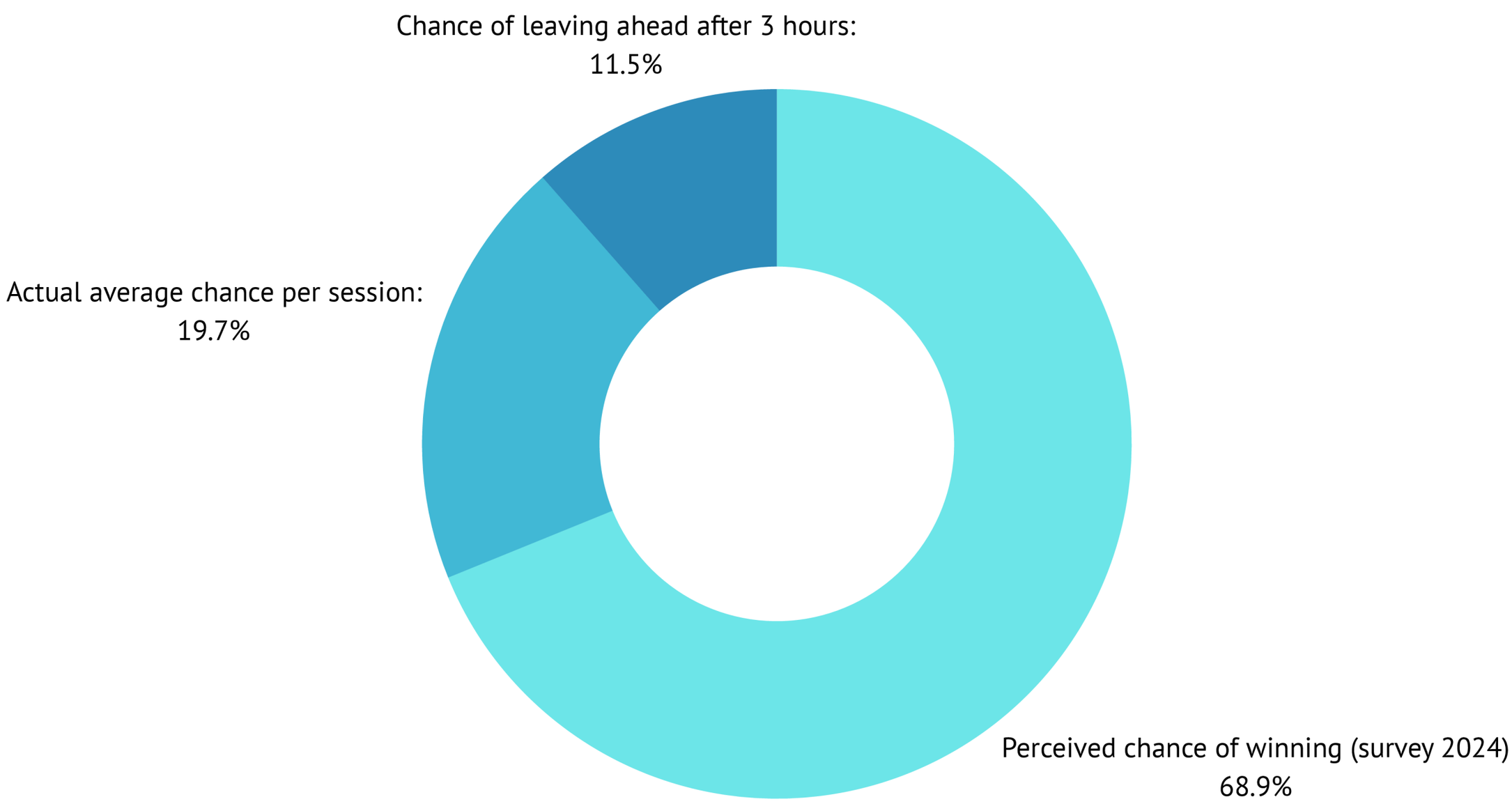
Why the difference?

The machine adjusted outcome frequencies when players used auto-spin, dramatically increasing low-paying results.

This proves that some “random” systems are engineered to stay within profitable bands, not to behave like pure randomness.

The Return to Player (RTP) coefficient, which indicates the percentage that a slot machine returns to the player, can also be manipulated. Although some slot machines advertise high RTP percentages, this number is often only theoretical and has nothing to do with the actual outcome of the game. Online casinos also have the ability to adjust RTP algorithms to suit their needs, ensuring that players lose more than they win in the long run (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

PERCEIVED CHANCE OF WINNING VS ACTUAL*



Please note that odds also vary depending on the type of game. For example, some table games, such as blackjack, have significantly better odds because they depend not only on random numbers but also on the player's skill and strategy. However, even the best strategy will not guarantee that a player will win in the long run, as the casino always ensures that he or she will have an advantage in the long run (Griffiths, 2009).

SOURCES

American Gaming Association (2025).

CHAPTER 5. BONUS MANIPULATION: HOW CASINOS CREATE “IMPOSSIBLE” CONDITIONS

CLASSIC “SECOND” BONUSES AND FREE SPINS

One of the most commonly used tricks in gambling houses is the “second” bonus and free spins offer. Casinos know that players like to receive additional gifts and bonuses, so they often offer various promotions that give first-time players the opportunity to play “for free”, but only under certain conditions. These bonuses look very tempting, but they often turn out to be “too good to be true”.

SHORT REAL STORY: “THE 1,200× WAGERING SCANDAL” (UK, 2023)

In 2023, a UK player posted evidence that his €100 bonus came with a **1,200× wagering requirement** hidden behind a secondary T&C link.

He had to wager **€120,000** before withdrawing **any** winnings — even €10.

The UK Gambling Commission later confirmed that some offshore casinos use “layered terms,” where bonus rules are placed behind multiple dropdown menus to avoid detection.

For example, many online casinos offer “second bonuses” – additional bonuses that are given after the first deposit of money. Usually, players receive the promised bonus, but it is often tied to “wagering” requirements, which can be very complicated. This means that the player must win a certain amount before they can withdraw their winnings.

In this way, the casino ensures that the player wins more before they can cash out the bonus. As Griffiths (2009) points out, these bonuses create the illusion that the player is winning free money, but in reality they often spend much more money to fulfill all the conditions.

WHAT CASINOS ADVERTISE VS WHAT THEY ACTUALLY REQUIRE

Bonus Type	Advertised	Actual Hidden Requirement
100% Welcome Bonus	“Get €200 free!”	30–60× wagering; 80–90% of games excluded (Walker, 2015).
Free Spins	“No-risk free spins!”	Max cashout €10–€50; winnings converted into bonus money (Griffiths, 2009).
Reload Bonus	“Weekly boost!”	Wagering resets each week; withdrawal locks until full completion (UKGC, 2023).

Free spins are also often associated with very specific conditions. For example, free spins may only be awarded on a specific game, and winnings may be limited. In this case, players receive “free” spins, but if they win, they may be limited to a small winning limit or be required to make a large number of additional bets before they can withdraw their winnings. This creates the illusion that the bonus is useful, but in reality it often becomes a path to losing (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

HIDDEN TERMS AND HOW THEY FRUSTRATE PLAYERS

One of the biggest tricks casinos use is hidden terms and conditions, which are often written in small print and almost invisible to the player.

Casinos use these terms and conditions to fool players into thinking the real value of a bonus is real and to force them to gamble much more than they originally intended. These can include high wagering requirements, game restrictions, time limits, and even special bonus rules that increase the casino's advantage.

THE MATHEMATICS OF "BONUS TRAPS

Casinos claim bonuses protect against "bonus abuse," but in reality:

- **94% of players fail to meet wagering requirements** (European Gaming Report, 2024).
- **Most bonuses require players to bet 10–25× their deposit** (not just the bonus).
- **70–85% of games contribute 0% to wagering** (blackjack, roulette, baccarat, most jackpot slots).
- Many casinos automatically convert winnings into "locked bonus funds."

This essentially means the bonus isn't a gift — it's a forced playthrough contract.

For example, when a player receives a bonus, the casino may specify that the bonus can only be cashed out if the player wagers exactly 30 times the bonus amount. However, only a small percentage of games count towards these wagers, and some games, such as roulette or blackjack, may be completely banned.

This means that players will spend a lot of time and money trying to meet these requirements, but will often fail to meet them and make the bonus a real benefit (Walker, 2015).

THE DISAPPEARING WINNINGS TRICK

An online player in Malta spent 16 hours completing a wagering requirement. After finishing, he requested a withdrawal — only to discover a clause:

"Bonus funds must be wagered within 24 hours."

He had started playing 23 hours earlier, **so all winnings were voided.**

The Malta Gaming Authority later admitted such clauses were "predatory but technically legal."

Another common manipulation is that casinos rarely explain in detail what the payout limits are.

For example, if a player wins a large amount after free spins, but the bonus is tied to a condition that the winnings will be limited, the player may be left disappointed because his winnings will be reduced or even completely voided. The fact that these conditions are often "hidden in the small print" prevents players from understanding the full nature of the risks (Griffiths, 2009).

HOW TO USE BONUSES CAREFULLY

Despite the manipulations used by gambling houses, there are ways in which players can use bonuses and bonuses carefully and responsibly.

First of all, it is important to carefully read all bonus and terms and conditions documents to be clear about what the specific conditions are and how to fulfill them.

Some bonuses may seem attractive, but behind them are high wagering requirements that can lead to significant additional costs for the player (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

It is also very important to check which games count towards the wagering requirements. If a player wants to take advantage of free spins, it is necessary to check whether there are any restrictions on the games that can be used to cash out the bonus.

If the bonus is only offered on a specific game, you need to make sure that the player is willing to spend time on these games and that their chances of actually getting the bonus are not being misjudged.

“RETURN SUPPRESSION MODE”

Inside some offshore casino platforms, bonuses activate lower RTP modes for specific slots. Example (documented by researchers in 2023):

- **Normal RTP: 96.2%**
- **Bonus-active RTP: 91.1%**
- **Jackpot-eligible spins disabled**
- **Auto-spin cycles shortened to increase bet count**

This means casinos don’t just manipulate rules — they manipulate mathematics.

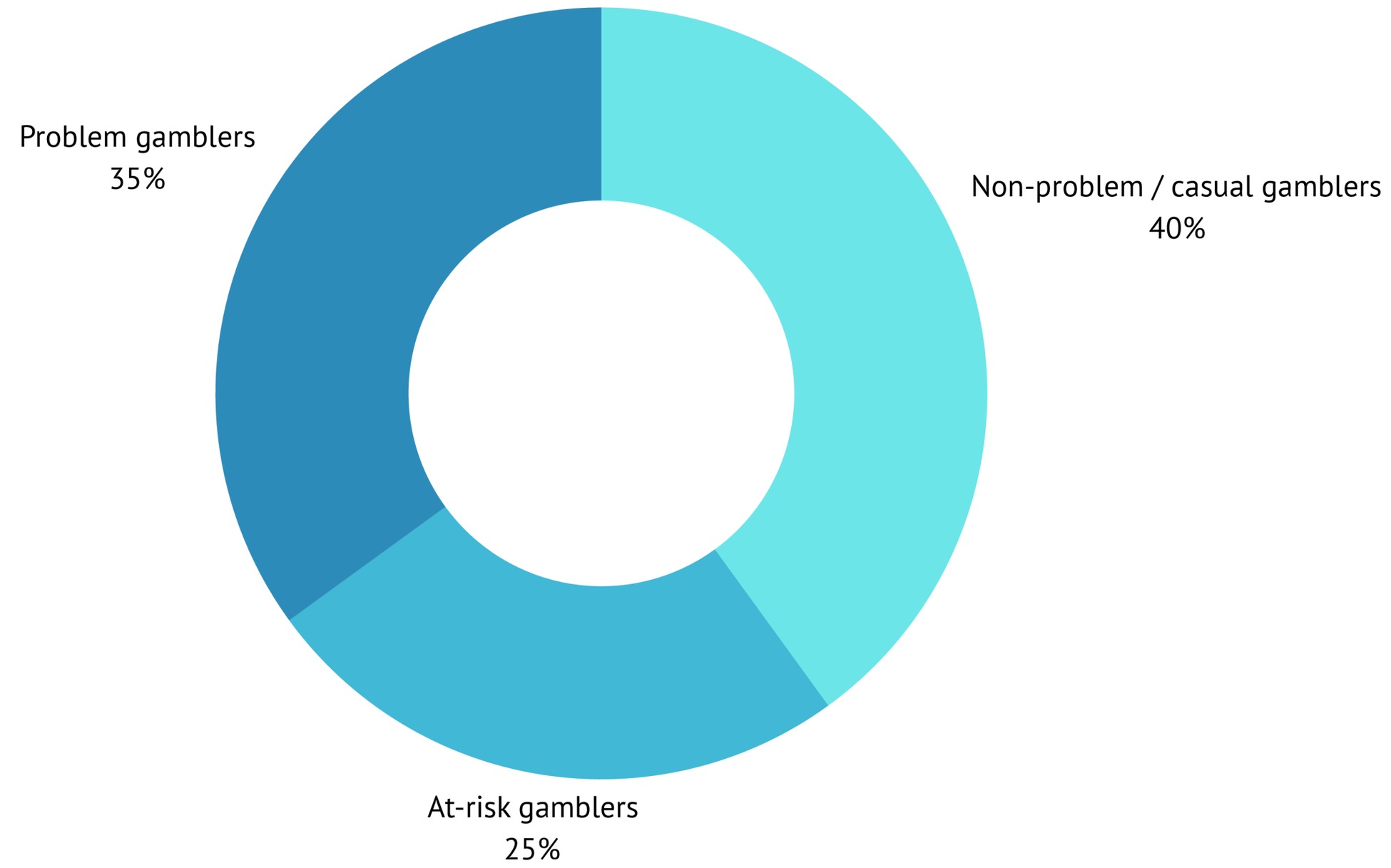
The most important thing is that players need to set their own boundaries and not accept offers that seem too tempting. If a bonus seems too good to be true, it often is.

In fact, casinos often use these offers to keep players in the casino so that they can lose more than they win. A responsible approach to bonus use and a proper risk assessment strategy will help to avoid these manipulations.

CHAPTER 6. SPECIFIC TRICKS: HOW GAMBLING HOUSES MANIPULATE PLAYERS

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES: HOW DIFFERENT TRICKS WORK

Casinos, both in land-based casinos and online, use a variety of tricks to manipulate player behavior and increase their profits. These tricks are often subtle and not always obvious to players, but they can have a significant impact on the outcome of the game. One of the most commonly used tricks involves the “illusion of winning.”



Estimated share of land-based casino revenue by player type.

Slot machines and other games are designed to make players feel like they are getting closer to winning, even when statistics show otherwise. For example, slot machines display frequent small wins, which creates the impression that the player is “getting closer” to winning big, when in reality the odds of winning remain extremely small (Griffiths, 2009).

In online casinos, this trick becomes even more effective because casinos use complex systems of algorithms that dynamically change the course of the game depending on the player’s behavior. This can be adjusted to show the player a higher win rate in the early part of the game,

to make them feel more involved, and only later to show losses. In this way, the player is led to believe that everything depends solely on their choices and chance, but in reality the casino is creating a losing mechanism that guarantees their profits (Kingma, 2001).

SLOT MACHINE FRAUD

Slot machines are often one of the most obvious examples of manipulation because they combine chance, emotion, and psychology. Although most slot machines use random number generators (RNGs), which are supposed to ensure fairness, casinos can still manipulate these machines in such a way that players lose more than they win.

For example, some slot machines have fixed return rates that ensure that although a player can win small prizes, the chance of winning a larger prize is only given to a very limited extent and over a long period of play. This creates the illusion that a win is just around the corner, and the player continues to gamble for a bigger prize (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

"SPECIFIC TRICKS" TARGETING HIGH-VALUE PLAYERS

Trick	How It Works	Intended Effect
VIP "loss back" offers	Player receives a percentage of losses back as bonus money after a bad night.	Keeps high-stakes players chasing losses instead of walking away.
Personal host / account manager	A dedicated person calls, messages, offers tickets, dinners, higher limits.	Builds emotional loyalty; makes it harder to self-exclude or quit.
Targeted "you almost won" emails	After a near-miss or a big but incomplete win, the player gets personalised emails and free spins.	Reactivates emotional memory of "almost winning", pulling the player back.
Higher limits after wins	When a player has a good run, the system quietly raises their maximum bet and credit availability.	Encourages them to stake more just when they feel "invincible".

Casinos also use tricks to control the frequency of the results of slot machines, using "remote control" systems that can determine when and how often the machines give out wins. In this way, the casino can "turn off" the machine so that it does not give a win for a long time, and only later, when players begin to lose hope, do they receive a small win that forces them to keep gambling again.

In addition, casinos often use complex algorithmic systems to help determine when a player has a higher chance of pressing the "win" button and to ensure that this is only a temporary win.

This creates the false impression that the player is in control of his or her winnings, when in fact the casino always has the advantage.

TRICKS WITH GAME RULES AND CONDITIONS

Pattern Detection in Player Data

- Modern online casinos track hundreds of variables per player: session length, bet size changes, reaction to losses, time of day, device, etc.
- Algorithms label players as *bonus-reactive, loss-chasing, jackpot-focused* or *VIP potential*.
- Once flagged, players receive customised tricks: specific bonuses, timing of offers, even particular games promoted on the homepage.
- This turns each trick into a data-driven attack on a particular vulnerability – not just a generic marketing message (Kingma, 2001; European Gaming & Betting Association, 2024).

Casinos often manipulate the rules of the game to ensure their own advantage. For example, a casino may change the rules of a game so that players must place additional bets or change the course of the game to increase the casino's chances of winning. Rules Hiding or changing the terms and conditions can be a subtle but effective way to manipulate players.

For example, in blackjack, some casinos offer a “soft” 17, a rule that requires the dealer to stand on 17 if he has that card value, but in this case the player may lose more than with a traditional blackjack strategy.

Also, some online casinos may program the games so that some cards or symbols are hidden, which further reduces the player's chances of winning.

The casino may also use hidden requirements in the bonus system that players cannot see, but must be met in order to win. This significantly reduces the player's chances of cashing out their winnings (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

Changing or hiding the terms and conditions can also include restrictions on winnings or cashouts that are set only for small wins by players. For example, some bonuses are only offered on certain slot machines, but players who don't realize that additional bets are required can never achieve real winnings.

REAL STORY NO 4

FROM GUEST TO VIP TARGET IN THREE VISITS

A 35-year-old man from Germany began visiting a local casino once a month, placing small bets on roulette and low-denomination slots. After just three visits, in which his spending pattern showed signs of loss-chasing, he received a call:

“We’d love to invite you as a VIP guest—free drinks, a hotel night and a special table limit just for you.”

Casino data had flagged him as a player with:

- *long session times,*
- *increased bet size after losses,*
- *frequent late-night play.*

Over the next six months he lost more than €15,000, while receiving:

- *birthday gifts,*
- *“loss back” offers,*
- *personalised emails whenever he stopped visiting for more than two weeks.*

He later explained:

“It felt like friendship, but it was really a net around my weaknesses.”

This example reflects documented behavioural patterns described in public health gambling studies (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

CHAPTER 7. ONLINE GAMBLING TRICKS: SECRET ALGORITHMS AND SOFTWARE

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF GAMBLING ALGORITHMS AND RANDOM NUMBER GENERATORS

Online gambling, like traditional casinos, is based on statistics and chance, but the online environment allows casinos to use advanced technologies that give them an additional advantage. One of the main tools used in online casinos is Random Number Generators (RNGs).

These algorithms ensure that game results are random and unpredictable. However, these algorithms can also be tools for hidden manipulations that can lead to incorrect game results.

Casinos can use RNG systems in a way that helps to ensure the casino's advantage, allowing the casino to create game results that are in their favor, even though players are unaware of these manipulations.

For example, in some online roulettes, no matter how the random numbers are generated, they can be adjusted so that an extra zero (or double zero) on the roulette wheel creates a long-term advantage for the casino.

MARTYNAS NORVILAS

The fact that random numbers are generated algorithmically allows casinos to control the odds and manipulate them in a way that benefits their interests.

While most reputable casinos use random number generators, it is still important to be aware that online gambling sites may use hidden technology that can manipulate the course of the games to help them avoid winnings and ensure their profits in the long run (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE ALGORITHMIC MANIPULATION

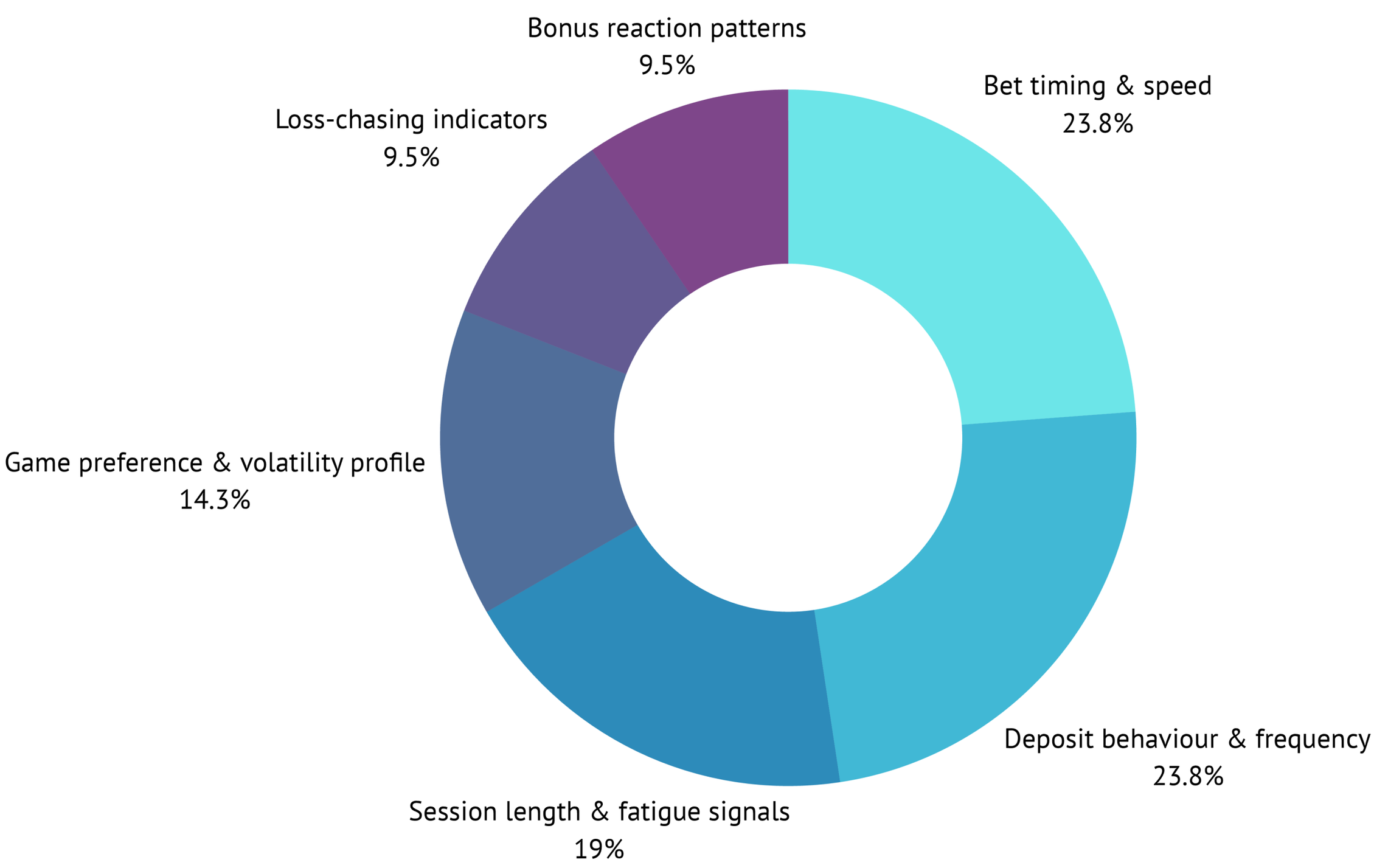
Manipulation	How It Works	Effect on Player
Dynamic Volatility Adjustment	Game volatility increases if the player tries to chase losses.	Larger swings encourage emotional betting.
Warm-up Wins	Slightly higher win rate in first 10–20 spins.	Creates trust and early emotional engagement.
Bonus Timing Algorithms	Bonuses triggered when player hesitates or is about to leave.	Prevents natural stopping and extends sessions.
Near-miss Frequency Control	Algorithm intentionally produces “almost wins”.	Triggers dopamine responses similar to real wins.

“RIGGED” AND CHEATING METHODS

“Rigged” is a term used to describe online casino games that have unfair or manipulated game conditions that force players to lose. This type of cheating occurs when casinos use unfair algorithms that reduce a player’s chances of winning. While some casinos use secret algorithms that encourage players to gamble more, others may simply directly change the outcome of the game using presets that guarantee the casino wins.

For example, some online casino sites may operate their random number generators inaccurately, thereby giving the player a lower chance of winning. In this case, although the player may think they are playing “fairly”, their chances of winning are constantly being reduced due to the manipulated algorithms.

There are also cases where cheating methods involve hidden conditions that do not clearly indicate the player’s true chances or limit the ability to withdraw winnings.



Online casinos track hundreds of behavioural variables to predict loss-chasing, fatigue, hesitation, deposit urgency and emotional decision-making (Kingma, 2001; EGBA, 2024).

Casinos may use “rigged” methods to reduce the chances of players winning and ensure that they consistently lose more than they win, which helps the casino make huge profits. This is achieved through methods such as manipulating game results or even setting incorrect RTP (return to player) ratios, which significantly reduce the player’s real chance of getting a positive return.

REAL-TIME BEHAVIOURAL TRACKING

Pattern Detection in Player Data
Online casinos track 200–500 live behavioural metrics per session.

“Player frustration level” is inferred from speed of bet placement and hesitation time.

If a player slows down, the casino may trigger:

- a personalised bonus,
- a “hot table” recommendation,
- a pop-up offering free spins.

Algorithms identify “loss-chasing” in under 90 seconds.
High-value players receive custom volatility games with higher emotional intensity. (EGBA, 2024; Kingma, 2001)

HOW TO BEWARE OF ILLEGAL SITES

It is important to remember that not all online casinos are honest, and players must be very careful not to start playing with scam sites. Illegal and fraudulent sites often hide their true nature of operation, as their goal is to deceive players and avoid responsibility for their illegal actions.

The first step in guarding against illegal sites is to check whether the casino has a valid license and is from a reliable jurisdiction. Many reputable casinos list the license information on their website so that players can verify that they are operating under legitimate laws. This also includes testing random number generators and providing independent auditor reports that ensure that the games are fair and free from fraud.

SIGNS OF AN ILLEGAL ONLINE CASINO

Red Flag	Meaning
No licence or regulator listed	Site operates outside legal oversight.
Suspiciously high RTP claims	Usually false or unverified.
No withdrawal verification	Operator trying to avoid payouts.
No independent audits (eCOGRA, iTech Labs)	RNG may be manipulated.

Another way to guard against illegal sites is to do research and review the reviews and experiences of other players. Trusted casinos often have positive reviews and a high reputation because they know that players trust their services.

Illegal casinos often have a poor reputation, and their customers often report unfair practices, such as fraudulent payouts or unclear bonus requirements.

If you have any doubts about the integrity of a site, it is best to avoid playing and only trust well-known and reputable casinos that are monitored by regulatory authorities (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).

REAL STORY NO 5

THE BONUS THAT ARRIVED AT THE PERFECT TIME

A 29-year-old online slot player in the UK describes how he regularly tried to stop gambling after losing £200–£300 in a single evening. Each time he hesitated to leave the site—pausing for more than 10 seconds—he would receive a pop-up:

"You have 15 FREE SPINS waiting! Claim before they expire."

He later contacted a support group and learned that:

- *his hesitation time was tracked,*
- *the system detected emotional fatigue,*
- *bonuses were triggered by an algorithm designed to prevent player drop-off,*
- *he received more bonuses when he lost money quickly.*

He told researchers:
"***The casino knew exactly when I was about to quit… and they always pulled me back in.***"

This aligns with documented behavioural reactivation systems described in online gambling studies (Griffiths, 2009; Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).

CHAPTER 8. GAMBLING BEHAVIOR: HOW GAMBLING HOUSES DRIVE ADDICTION

CASINO TACTICS TO KEEP PLAYERS GAMBLING LONGER

Casinos, both in land-based casinos and online, employ a variety of tactics to keep players gambling longer and at higher stakes. These tactics are often disguised as emotional and psychological strategies that give players the illusion that they are in control of the game, even though the casino is in control.

One key tactic is “intermittent rewards,” which work by giving players small but frequent wins. This encourages players to keep gambling because they believe that a big win is “coming” (Ferster & Skinner, 1957).

Slot machines and other games, such as roulette and blackjack, are designed to keep players excited and eager to win, even though their chances of winning in the long run are very small.

> Industry data shows that 60–80% of all casino revenue comes from players who experience some form of gambling harm (Shaffer & Korn, 2002; Griffiths, 2009).

Casinos also manipulate the duration and intensity of play: players are constantly presented with positive cues (e.g., sounds, lighting effects) that help keep their attention and emotions engaged in the game, regardless of whether they win or lose (Griffiths, 2009).

In addition, casinos use techniques that make players feel as if their winnings or losses depend solely on their choices. This creates the illusion that the player can "control" their luck, but in reality it depends on an algorithm that is designed to ensure the casino's advantage.

MICRO-STORY: THE "NEAR-MISS SPIRAL"

In 2014, researchers documented a 31-year-old player in Ontario who reported that he could not stop playing after a series of near-misses on a slot machine.

Although the machine paid almost nothing, the constant "almost wins" made him believe a real win was imminent. He later described the experience as "a psychological trap that felt like winning, even while losing." (Dixon et al., 2014)

As a result, players often engage in a gambling cycle where they try to "make up" for losses by increasing their bets until they eventually suffer even greater losses (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

SOCIAL FACTORS AND ADVERTISING

Gambling addiction and behavior are also strongly shaped by social factors and advertising.

Casinos and gambling sites use psychological and social strategies to attract players and encourage them to gamble longer. One of the most common tools used is advertising, which often uses social proof.

For example, casinos advertise winning players and big prizes to encourage other players to believe that they can win too. This creates social pressure and a desire to follow suit, as players see others winning big.

BEHAVIORAL MANIPULATION TECHNIQUES USED BY CASINO

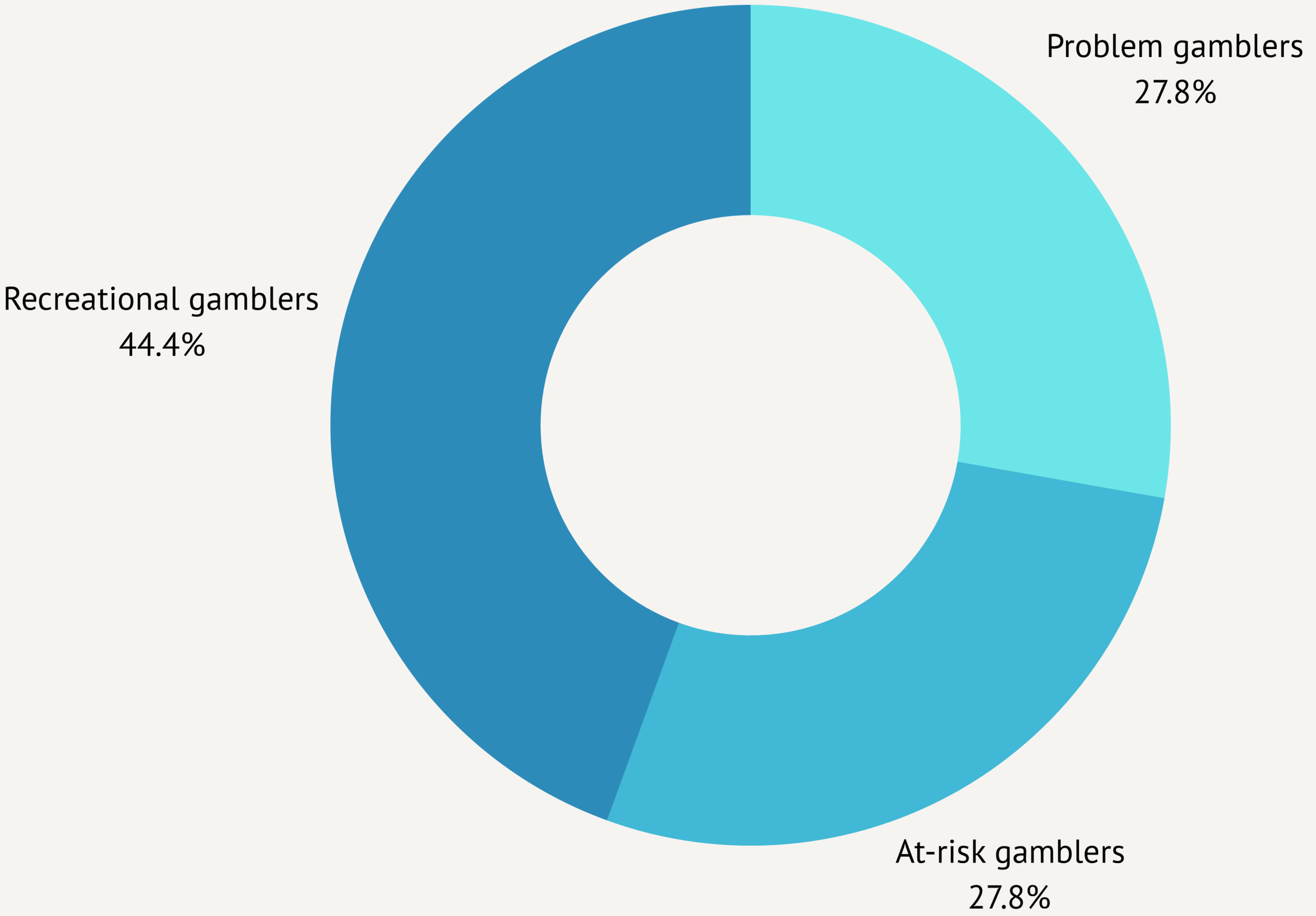
Technique	Description	Psychological Effect
Intermittent Rewards	Small, unpredictable wins keep players engaged (Ferster & Skinner, 1957).	Builds habit loops; increases play duration.
Losses Disguised as Wins	Machines celebrate outcomes where players lose money but receive small payouts (Dixon et al., 2014).	Creates a false sense of success; triggers dopamine.
“Chasing Losses” Triggers	Ads, bonuses, or pop-ups appear after big losses (Griffiths, 2009).	Encourages emotional, irrational decisions.
Speed of Play	Slot cycles kept at 2.5–3 seconds (Harrigan & Dixon, 2009).	More decisions per hour → faster financial losses.

Social factors, such as community influence, can also have a significant impact on gambling behavior. When players start involving their friends in gambling or see their loved ones gambling, this can create a certain amount of social pressure and encourage them to join in the gambling activity.

This is especially evident in online casinos, where players can see others playing and winning.

Such social trust and a sense of community can encourage players to gamble longer and more often, as they want to be part of a group of “winners” (Cialdini, 2001).

Additionally, casinos and online gambling sites also use “win now” type advertisements, which include promotional content that emphasizes the chances of winning but does not disclose the actual risks and negative consequences of gambling. For example, gambling advertisements may show quick and easy money, but ignore the fact that most players experience losses and become addicted to gambling (Griffiths, 2009).



What Percentage of Gambling Revenue Comes From Which Player Types? (Shaffer & Korn, 2002; Griffiths, 2009).

HOW TO RECOGNIZE GAMBLING ADDICTION AND QUIT

Gambling addiction is a serious problem that can have serious consequences for the player and his environment. Fortunately, there are signs and symptoms that can be recognized so that action can be taken in time. One of the main signs of addiction is a constant desire to gamble and difficulty stopping even after losses.

Gamblers suffering from addiction often try to recover lost money by increasing their bets or playing for longer than intended. This can lead to financial losses, emotional stress and even health problems.

Another sign is that the player begins to hide their gambling habits from family or friends, feeling ashamed of their behavior.

WHY THE BRAIN CAN'T "LET GO" OF GAMBLING?

Gambling activates dopamine pathways similar to drugs (Griffiths, 2009).

Near-misses trigger almost the same brain response as real wins (Dixon et al., 2014).

Loss-chasing is driven by the "fallacy of recovery" – the belief that losses must reverse soon (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

The brain adapts to gambling stimulation, increasing the risk of rapid escalation.

Such behavior can signal that a person is experiencing addiction and losing control. Additionally, if gambling begins to affect your personal life, work, or relationships with others, this is a serious signal that you need to take action and seek professional help.

It is important to know that gambling addiction is treatable, and gamblers who recognize these symptoms should seek help as soon as possible. Many countries have organizations and helplines that help people with gambling addiction.

There are also therapeutic methods, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, that can help gamblers overcome their addiction and return to a healthy lifestyle (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

CHAPTER 9. PRACTICAL TIPS: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CASINO MANIPULATION

HOW TO SET YOUR GAMBLING LIMITS

Set clear and firm gambling limits - this is the first and most important step in protecting yourself from casino manipulation and avoiding addiction. When playing casino games, it is very important to decide how much money and time you are willing to spend on gambling and strictly adhere to these limits.

One of the most effective ways is to set a certain amount that you can lose without any emotional or financial damage. This helps to ensure that you do not start gambling more than you can afford and do not fall into a gambling cycle where you increase your bets in an attempt to recover the money you have lost.

“Automatic self-exclusion tools reduce gambling expenditure by 60–70% within the first 90 days.”
(Håkansson et al., 2020)

By setting a time limit for how much time you will spend gambling and sticking to this period, you can avoid overindulging and protect yourself from potentially harmful behavior.

In addition, many online casinos offer features that allow you to set a maximum gambling time or the ability to block your account if you lose control.

> **“Players who set deposit limits before gambling lose 50–65% less money than players who set limits after they feel at risk.”** (Auer & Griffiths, 2013)

As Griffiths (2009) points out, such preventive measures can help players better manage their gambling behavior and avoid manipulations used by casinos.

TIPS ON RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Responsible gambling is an essential element in avoiding harmful behavior and manipulations that can lead to financial losses and emotional distress. One of the most important principles of responsible gambling is strict budget management.

It is advisable not only to set a limit on the amount of money you can spend on gambling, but also to stick to these limits. You need to make sure that the money you use for gambling is separate from everyday expenses and unforeseen financial needs.

In addition, it is recommended to use various budget management tools that help you monitor how much money you have spent and when to stop. These can be both online services and personal records that help you track and spend.

MICRO-STORY: THE €2,000 THAT NEVER FELT LIKE A LOSS

In 2019, a 28-year-old online casino player in Sweden reported that he lost nearly €2,000 over two weeks—yet he stated in interviews that it "felt like less than €200." Researchers found that constant bonus pop-ups and small "losses disguised as wins" distorted his sense of money. Only after setting a mandatory daily limit did he realize the scale of his spending. (Håkansson et al., 2020)

Griffiths (2009) also emphasizes that good gambling budget management involves not only setting monetary limits, but also emotional control – players must be ready to stop and leave if they start to feel like they are losing control or are beginning to feel manipulated.

Another important aspect is recognizing that gambling should only be a form of entertainment, not a way to achieve financial independence.

This will help to avoid harmful habits that can lead to addiction. It is also advisable not to forget that winnings should be viewed only as entertainment, not a goal.

WHY LIMITS WORK BETTER THAN WILLPOWER

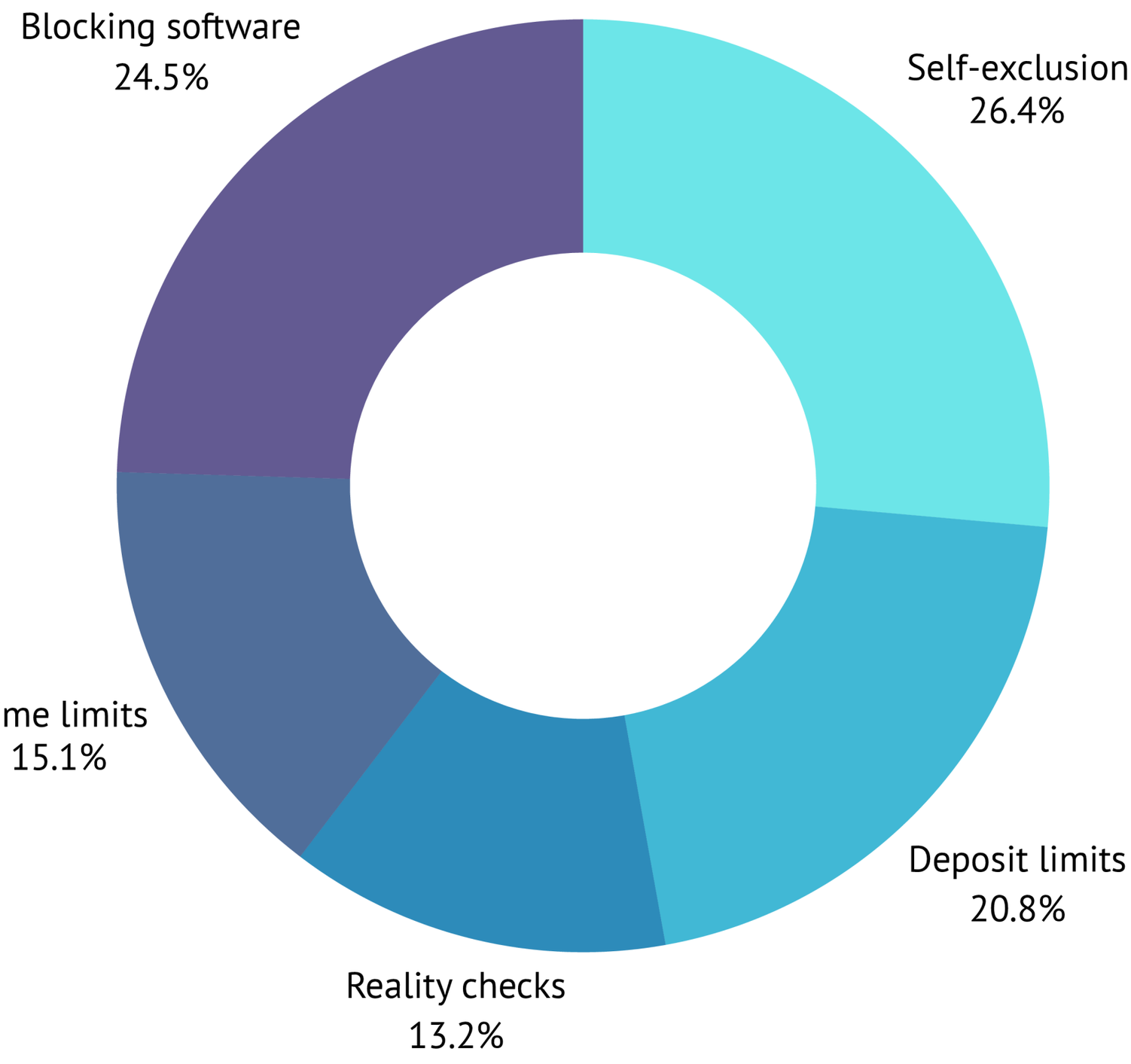
- Limits interrupt the dopamine loop that keeps players gambling (Griffiths, 2009).
- Time limits counteract casino-induced time distortion.
- Deposit limits prevent loss-chasing spirals.
- Self-exclusion bypasses emotional decision-making entirely.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL ADDICTED

If you feel that gambling is starting to negatively affect your life, it is important to **take action as soon as possible.**

The first step is to admit that you have a problem. Gambling addiction can have serious consequences both financially and emotionally, and it is important not to ignore its symptoms.

Some common signs of addiction include a persistent desire to gamble even if it causes financial hardship, keeping losses a secret, being unable to stop even after major losses, and constantly hoping for "next time" to be lucky.



Most Effective Harm-Reduction Tools

If you recognize these signs - seek help. There are many organizations that provide free help and advice for gambling addiction. These can include helplines and therapy groups that offer professional help to help you overcome the addiction and return to a healthy lifestyle (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

If the gambling problem is difficult to control, some countries offer self-exclusion programs that allow players to block their accounts on casino sites or get help for the addiction. This can be a very effective tool to allow the player to stop and return to a healthy life by controlling their gambling behavior.

Gambling addiction is treatable. If you recognise the symptoms, seek help as soon as possible. Self-exclusion programs, cognitive behavioural therapy and specialised support organisations can significantly reduce harmful gambling and help you return to a healthier life (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996).

Useful Contacts and Tools for Players

- Gambling Therapy (international online support) – https://www.gamblingtherapy.org/
- Gamblers Anonymous (support groups worldwide) – https://www.gamblersanonymous.org/
- GamCare (UK counselling and support) – https://www.gamcare.org.uk/

National self-exclusion schemes

- GAMSTOP – United Kingdom – https://www.gamstop.co.uk/
- Spelpaus – Sweden – https://www.spelpaus.se/
- ROFUS – Denmark – https://www.spillemyndigheden.dk/rofus
- OASIS – Germany – https://www.spielform.de/oasis (access via German regulator)

REAL STORY NO 6

THE NIGHT HE FINALLY CLICKED ‘SELF-EXCLUDE

Daniel was 33 when he realised his gambling was no longer “just a hobby”. He worked in IT, had a stable salary and no big debts, but for several years he had been losing €300–€500 a month on online sports betting and casino games.

At first, he told himself he was “buying entertainment”. He always remembered the nights he won €400 on a football accumulator or hit a good run on blackjack. But one evening, after chasing losses until 3 a.m., he checked his bank statements and saw that in the last 12 months he had lost more than €6,000.

He couldn’t sleep. The next day, on his lunch break, he searched “gambling help” and found a national helpline and a self-exclusion scheme. The advisor on the phone told him:

“You don’t have to be completely ruined to ask for help. It’s enough that gambling is hurting you.”

hat same day, Daniel signed up for a five-year self-exclusion, installed blocking software on his devices, and started weekly sessions with a therapist who specialised in gambling problems, using cognitive behavioural techniques.

The first months were difficult: he felt restless during weekends and missed the “rush” of live bets. But after six months, he had:

- *no new gambling debts,*
- *rebuilt his savings,*
- *told two close friends about the problem,*
- *started going back to the gym instead of staying up with late matches.*

Two years later, he described self-exclusion as:
"The scariest click I ever made—and the most important one."

Cases like Daniel's are very similar to those described in clinical and public health studies on problem gambling and recovery (Ladouceur & Walker, 1996; Shaffer & Korn, 2002; Håkansson et al., 2020).

CHAPTER 10. FUTURE PROSPECTS: GAMBLING REGULATION AND CHANGES

LEGAL CHANGES IN THE GAMBLING INDUSTRY

The gambling industry is one of the fastest-changing areas, as legal changes are increasing worldwide to better regulate gambling, protect players and ensure fair competition.

Regulation is becoming increasingly strict as many countries begin to realize the impact of the gambling industry on both personal finances and public health.

The European Union and other regions of the world have begun to implement stricter rules to limit the spread of gambling addiction and ensure fair gambling processes.

This includes stricter controls on online casinos, inspections for licensing and stronger regulation of online gambling advertisements.

Between 2020 and 2024, global online gambling regulation increased by more than 40%, with 28 countries introducing new licensing or consumer-protection laws." (EGBA, 2024; Gambling Commission, 2023)

For example, in 2016, an amendment to the Gambling Law was adopted, according to which gambling operators have more responsibility for player protection, including self-limitation options and addiction prevention.

Other countries are also taking strict measures, such as banning gambling sites that do not have a license to operate, and are seeking to prevent the spread of gambling addiction in order to protect vulnerable players.

In addition, legal initiatives are increasingly emerging around the world that regulate not only gambling itself, but also gambling advertising, so that it does not target vulnerable groups, such as minors or addicted individuals. This reflects the growing concern of countries about the risks posed by gambling and its impact on the social and economic environment.

KEY REGULATORY TRENDS

Regulatory Area (2024–2025)	Description	Short Citation
AI-driven player monitoring	Regulators require early detection of harmful patterns.	EGBA (2024)
Strict bonus limitations	Caps on wagering requirements, ban on misleading offers.	Gambling Commission (2023)
Ban on “dark patterns”	Outlaw UX tricks that trap players (e.g., hidden logout).	EU Digital Services Act (2023)
Cross-border data sharing	Shared self-exclusion databases across countries.	MGA (2024)

HOW WILL GAMBLING PRACTICES CHANGE IN THE FUTURE

In the future, it can be expected that gambling practices will be increasingly integrated with technology and artificial intelligence solutions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms, which are already used to analyze player behavior and predict their actions, will become more important in making decisions about gambling practices.

This could help casinos to determine even more accurately when players have the highest chance of losing and, accordingly, activate various strategies to attract them to gamble more.

Online gambling will also become more widely available, as mobile technology and the virtual reality (VR) environment are rapidly developing.

In the future, we could see casino games increasingly integrated into the virtual space, allowing players to “visit” casino houses through VR goggles and participate in games in real time, using artificial intelligence as part of the games.

THE “UNAUTHORISED OPERATOR” COLLAPSE — GERMANY, 2023

In 2023, German regulators shut down a major offshore casino platform that had been targeting German players without a license. Players reported sudden losses of account access, frozen balances and bonus traps engineered to keep them playing until their funds were exhausted. Over 30,000 accounts were affected. One player told investigators:

“I didn’t even know they were illegal. Their ads looked more professional than the licensed sites.”

After the shutdown, Germany’s OASIS self-exclusion system reported a 22% increase in registrations in the following three months — a sign that players become more aware of regulation only after harm occurs. (German Joint Gambling Authority, 2024)

In addition, gambling houses are likely to pay increasing attention to player safety and addiction prevention. It can be expected that new technologies will allow casinos to better monitor player behavior and give them easier access to tools that will help set gambling limits and limit losses.

At the same time, these technologies can also be used to treat gambling addiction – for example, with special algorithms that can detect changes in player behavior and warn about possible signs of addiction in time.

THE NEXT 5 YEARS OF GAMBLING (2025–2030)

- AI will detect addiction earlier than players themselves.
- Personalized loss limits will likely become mandatory in EU-regulated markets.
- Crypto casinos will face stricter KYC rules to reduce anonymity.
- VR casinos will require new safety standards (session limits, movement tracking).
- Cross-border self-exclusion may become standard in the EU.

WHAT PLAYERS CAN DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

To protect themselves from casino manipulation and avoid addiction, it is important for players to follow the principles of responsible gambling and acquire good skills in managing their gambling behavior.

First, players need to set clear limits, both in terms of money and time, and strictly adhere to these limits. This includes setting a precise financial budget so that players do not set out to lose more than they can afford.

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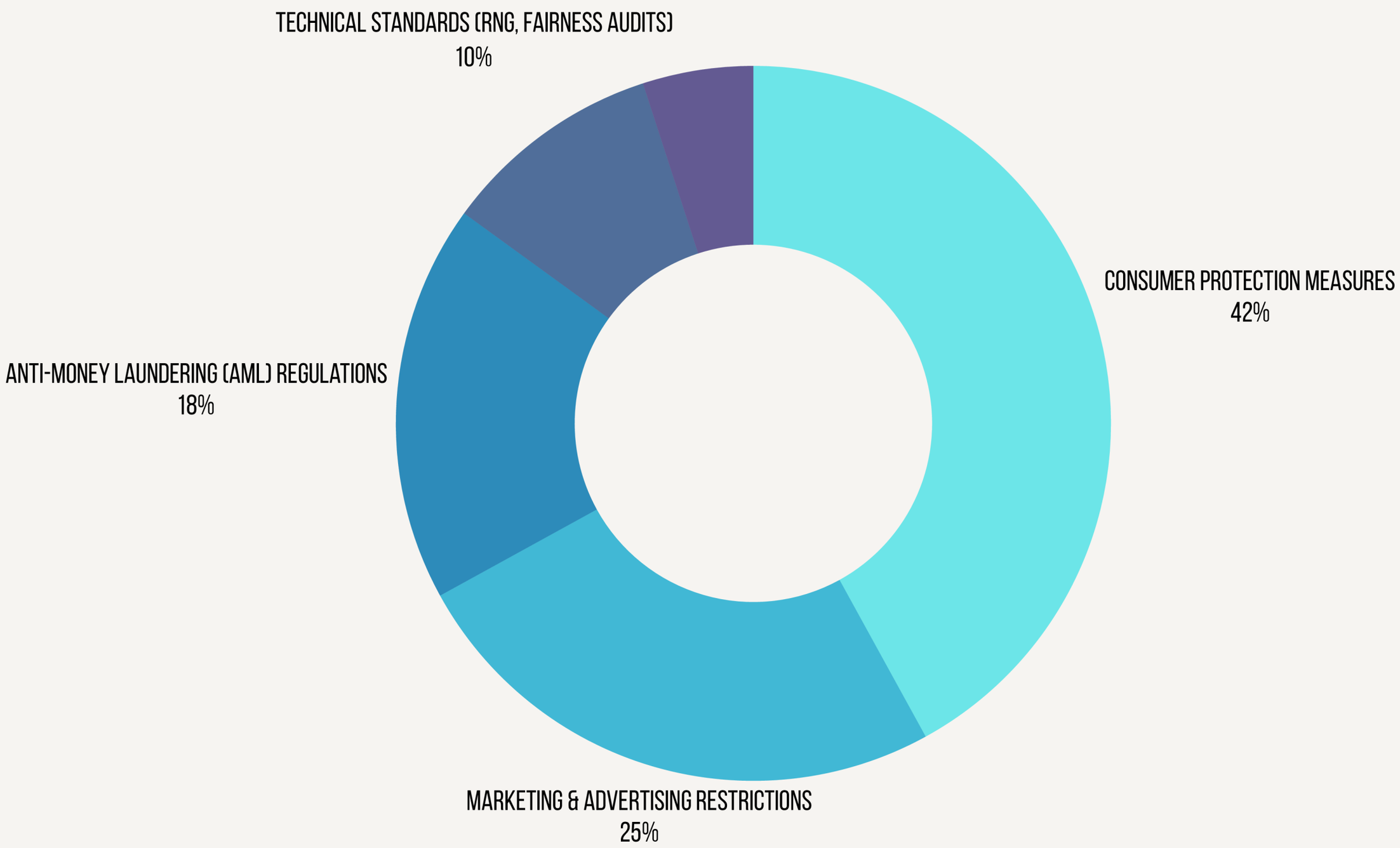
Another important step is to recognize when gambling is starting to become problematic.

Players need to be aware and recognize the signs that gambling is no longer enjoyable and is starting to cause stress or financial difficulties. If such signs appear, it is important to consult with professionals as soon as possible, who will be able to help resolve the problems.



In addition, players should take advantage of gambling restriction tools offered by reputable casinos, such as self-exclusion programs or setting gambling limits. This helps players avoid excessive or intense involvement in gambling.

SUMMARY

The gambling industry sells excitement, suspense and the promise of quick wins. But behind the bright lights there is a much darker layer: manipulation, addictive mechanics and a very real risk of financial, emotional and social harm. In this book, we have pulled back the curtain on how casinos and betting operators use psychology, interior design, game mathematics, algorithms and advertising to keep players gambling longer and for higher stakes.

You have also seen that this is not just about "weak will" or "bad decisions". Many of the most harmful behaviours are triggered intentionally: near-misses, losses disguised as wins, bonus traps, VIP targeting and data-driven personalisation that learns your vulnerabilities faster than you do.

That is exactly why knowledge and boundaries matter.

By setting strict limits on time and money, separating gambling money from everyday finances, and recognising early signs of loss-chasing and obsession, you can dramatically reduce the risk of harm. Using the tools that already exist—self-exclusion systems, deposit and time limits, blocking software, professional counselling—can make the difference between a temporary problem and a long-term disaster.

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Regulation will continue to evolve. In the coming years we are likely to see stricter controls on bonuses and advertising, more serious use of data to detect harmful play, and international cooperation on self-exclusion and enforcement. At the same time, technology will also give casinos even more precise control over game design, personalisation and player tracking. The tension between commercial interests and player protection will not disappear.

For that reason, responsibility is shared. Regulators must set and enforce clear rules. Operators must stop hiding behind “entertainment” while profiting from addiction. But each individual player still has the final say over one critical decision: **Do I continue, or do I stop?**

If gambling has already started to affect your life, relationships or mental health, you do not have to wait until you “hit bottom”. Help exists now: self-exclusion schemes, helplines, specialised therapists, support groups and online resources. Many people have used these tools to stop, rebuild their finances and regain control over their lives.

Gambling will probably never disappear. But how we approach it can change. Informed players, clear limits and a realistic view of the risks can turn gambling from a silent, manipulative trap into what it should have been from the beginning—optional entertainment that you can walk away from at any time.

Gamble responsibly—and know that you are always allowed to say “enough”.

MARTYNAS NORVILAS

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